GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:235
ANSWERED ON:13.03.2001
DIFICIENCY OF VITAMIN `A`
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Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that near about 12 million people in the country are suffering from Vitamin-A deficiency;

(b) if so, whether the Department of Biotechnology is going to take part in the joint research withthe Swiss for the golden rice project as reported in `The Hindustan Times` dated February 15, 2001 captioned `Golden Rice on Platter soon`;

(c) if so, the details in this regard;

(d) whether the Department of Biotechnology and ICAR have shown keen interest in the Project;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the time by which the research work is likely to be completed?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT)

(a) :Recent National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) repeat survey has indicated the prevalence of 0.7% deficiency of vitamin-A in pre-school children. It is estimated that about 12 million people may be suffering from vitamin-A deficiency.

(b) to (f):Under the second phase of Indo-Swiss Collaboration in Biotechnology (ISCB), one of the projects under discussion relates to golden rice technology. The proposal involves Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and other scientific institutions and universities. The joint research programme would involve back-crossing, expression and transfer of gene encoding beta carotene, a precursor of vitamin-A and biosafety studies in Indian environment. The India Institutions identified are: Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi; University of Delhi, South Campus, New Delhi; Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore; and Directorate of Rice Research, Hyderabad. Implementation and monitoring would be done by Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and ICAR scientists and some international experts. Training of Indian scientists in the Swiss laboratories is an integral part of the project. The results leading to Pro-vitamin-A rich Indian rice varieties to be used by resource poor farmers are expected within 5-6 years following the implementation of National Biosafety Guidelines.